

THE INFLUENCE OF WESTERN CULTURE ON FASHION DESIGNERS IN SELECTED COMMUNITIES OF KPIRI MPOSHI DISTRICT OF CENTRAL PROVINCE, ZAMBIA

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to examine the perceptions of people on the influence of Western culture on fashion designers. A mixed research approach was used. A concurrent research design was employed in the study. The target population were fashion designers, local consumers and fashion traders and the research sample size was 40 respondents. A questionnaire and interview guide were used to collect the data. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 was used to analyse quantitative data from the questionnaire to generate descriptive statistics in the form of frequency tables and percentage distributions to give clear explanations, presentation and interpretation of the research results. Qualitative data was analyzed by using thematic analysis to generate themes. The study showed that Western culture has influences on consumer behaviour. The study showed that culture influences consumers. These effects on consumers; influence their thoughts, affirm what is desirable, value diversity, affect the norms and affect the attitudes. Culture influences the selection, purchase and consumption of goods and services and serves to direct the consumer behaviour of members of a particular society. Consumers buy clothes which they feel familiar and comfortable for the satisfaction of their wants according to their cultural values. The study revealed that culture, does influence consumer behavior in the fashion industry in Kapirimposhi. The study recommended the need for concerted efforts to preserve and promote indigenous clothing styles. Fashion designers and industry stakeholders should collaborate to showcase the richness and cultural significance of traditional attire, encouraging its continued appreciation and adoption. Acknowledging the influence of clothing design on societal norms and behaviours, fashion designers should prioritise ethical considerations in their designs.

Keywords: *Culture, behavior, beliefs, local consumer, globalisation and fashion.*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Culture is as old as mankind, but became common with the emergency of consumer society in the nineteenth century. Culture along with fashion help people to learn about the future of global consumerism and its influence on consumer behaviour in the fashion industry. Dinesha (2014) pointed out that, consumer behaviour consists of a range of activities performed by consumers to use, select, secure, and dispose of products and services. The phenomenon of the fashion industry is widespread and progressive. A progression can be seen across the globe and over time, although;

some places have embraced its progression faster than others. With that in mind, the progression can be

In Zambian society, the appearance of an individual works as a ticket to transmitting one's social status, structure, values and lifestyle. Statistically, Zambia has about 73 different ethnic groups with cultures different from each other, each of these cultures have its traditional practices and norms surrounding its society (Mushimbwe, 2009). The issue of social status has forced fashion communication to undergo a very serious shaft in its communicable behavioural aspects starting from projecting a basic image of how we look like and how we feed to expressing our emotional experiences through the fashion industry interactive implement in the dress code which has an impact on consumer behaviour. Fashion has been one of the things that has cut across the globe. It has slowly dissolved and defined the distinct cultures of the world due to globalization. The fashion industry fully understands and adapting to these progressive changes and has been forced to produce apparel that appeals to the youthful generation. Due to the global trends young people would tend to buy out of impulse. The fashion industry has built its momentum on apparel that satisfies the younger generation and neglects the old (Gan, 2010).

The study of cultural influence on fashion may not appear to be a very academic pursuit, the reality is as Sertanya (2013) cited Eicher et al, (2009) that, "everywhere in the world, people make daily decisions about what to wear or how to dress". Dress patterns operate as an identity and a pointer of a particular culture. When dealing with culture and its customs, it can be varied on the basis of both society and religious background. Dinesha (2014) carried out a study on the modification of clothing habits. The study reported that there are major diversification of costume designs is generated and influenced by several factors like raw material supply, technical skills of the people, moral standards, and religious values, political and aesthetic ideals.

Culture is a very important factor which displays the diversification of a dress pattern. For instance there are significant differences in wedding dresses of Indian and Western cultures. The Asian brides most of the time use sarees with veil as their wedding dress, while Western brides dress up with long white gown with hat. Meanwhile, just within India, in the Southern, Eastern and Western part of the country, there are some differences of sarees they use as wedding dress. It is society that shapes the beliefs, values, and norms that largely define these tastes and preferences. Almost unconsciously, the people absorb worldview that defines their relationship not only to themselves but to others, to organizations, to society, to nature and to the universe at large. According to Gilbert (2012) cultural factors are some of the strongest influences on the consumer buyer behavior. Cultural factor is the set of basic values; perceptions, wants, and behavior are learned by consumer from their families and other important social institutions. Culture is the most basic source of consumer wants and behavior; it was at the foundation of a consumer's world view. Marketers need to remember that every group or society has a culture. Cultural influences can and will vary greatly from to country. Every cultural group has numerous subcultures which will have a set of shared values based on the common life experience and situation (Sertanya, 2013).

Joy (2010) discussed that culture is automatic and almost invisible. Therefore marketers need to remember that every group or society has a culture. Cultural influence can vary greatly from to country. Every cultural group has numerous subculture which will have a set of shared values based on the common life experience and situation. The influence of culture on consumers can be of value to

cultural sustainability and its preservation as well as daily dress decision of people in a particular society. It is African to completely cover the body when one moves in public. The colorful, exotic patterns portray the African cultures and traditions. The boubou itself is a West African garment worn by women and men and is found in Senegal, Nigeria, and elsewhere. The chitenge prints appear widely as a staple of Zambian clothing, Democratic Republic of the Congo as well as from other parts of West Africa. With African traditional clothing, or at least clothing inspired by traditional styles. Such as Ghanaian kente cloth, with its rich textures and vital ceremonial role; the simplicity of Kenyan kanga cloth; or the elegant robes, whether in vibrant color or simply white, of West African countries like Senegal and Nigeria (Kailash, 2010).

The culture of the people all over the world is creating a huge impact on purchase decision for clothes in order to meet new objectives. Culture plays an important role in selecting the fabrics and designs of products. There are so many varieties now that the opportunities for growth are innumerable. For example; people are influenced to dress like their favourite actor or actress (Kotter, 2012). The success of the fashion trend lies in the way the society interprets the fashion trend and judges it. Its impact can be measured by the level of its social acceptance. A simple sociological definition of fashion is being first with the latest (Krugman, 2015). The definition above means that fashion is about change, and that an object, style, or activity stands out against a backdrop of stability. Thus, in other words fashion can be said to be to being right in a specific time and context. What is right in fashion can only be defined by a clique of people of professionals who are fashion leaders. This is a group of people that are viewed as having the status to determine what styles are trending. Every fashion that comes has followers, meanwhile, it is also important that some people are out of fashion. This is because it is not everyone or everything that can be viewed as being in fashion. Every time a piece of cloth becomes too common it is likely to be replaced. Therefore, fashion is a recurrent phenomenon that creates its own history, from which ideas are either reused or reinterpreted.

Culture and society remains forever as a generational inheritance for different ethnic groups, fashion trends come and go, while societal values are established and evolving characteristic to their beliefs and culture. On the other hand, culture pressures fashion to work as a refreshing concept worthy enough to be portrayed for society's appreciation. In Senegal, the Boubou is the most popular clothing recognized. Senegalese people generally wear the Boubou in a complete manner (top and bottom garments) generally referred to as Grand and Complete Boubou (Scott, 2010). Boubou material came from Europe and Asia. Bamask Basin: the more it shines, the better it appears. It is the preferred fabric of West African people. The more it shines, the more Senegalese people will like it, since then, wax Boubou has never left African land. African people are known for their cheerfulness and good mood, with no doubt, Senegalese people must draw on their happiness from their sunny suits which are now adopted as their Traditional Wear and has infiltrated the African continent (Venkatasamy, 2015).

Zambians believe in covering up the body in their dressing. It is cultural that human bodies should not be exposed. The Zambian women are frequently clad in colorful printed cloth known as chitenge. It is the national culture that the rectangular-shaped chitenge are wrapped around the waist. The chitenges are used as skirts, while smaller matching pieces may be used as head scarves; and in some cases, the cloth may be sewn into a top that complements the other components. Shirts, pants, and vests made of chitenge are also quite common. Siyawu (2006) carried out a study on the importance of cultural dressing to local people, the study revealed that

cultural dressing enables the people to feel the sense of belonging to a particular society. There is no study conducted on how culture influence the consumer behavior. Malama (2016) explained that fashion play an important role within the lifetime of the complete society and every individual. Fashion is primarily a vehicle for socio-cultural development. Fashion industry does not create its own trends but gets related to the foremost recent ones. Fashion is most current well liked mode of expression this is because it tends to replicate the final cultural trends. In other words, fashion establishes them during an approach as a result of modernity.

According to Mushimbwe (2009), the adoption of western cloth design in Zambian society has brought about several demerits, notably in terms of cultural erosion and economic dependency. Firstly, the proliferation of western fashion trends often leads to a diminishing appreciation for traditional Zambian attire, eroding the rich cultural heritage and identity of the nation. This cultural loss can have profound impacts on social cohesion and a sense of belonging among Zambian communities. Additionally, the reliance on imported western clothing perpetuates economic dependency on foreign markets, diverting resources away from local textile industries and hindering the development of a self-sustaining fashion economy. Moreover, the prevalence of western designs may contribute to a homogenization of global fashion, stifling the diversity and uniqueness of Zambian clothing traditions. Therefore, while embracing elements of western cloth design can offer opportunities for innovation and cultural exchange, it is crucial to also prioritize the preservation and promotion of Zambia's indigenous sartorial heritage. Thus the purpose of the study was to examine the perceptions of the influence of western culture on Fashion Designers in the selected communities of Kpiri Mposhi district of Central province in Zambia.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

The study sought to find out how local and western culture influences consumer behavior in the fashion industry in the selected communities of Kapiri Mposhi district. The study employed mixed research approach to collect and analyse the data. Concurrent research design was used to collect both quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously. The target population were fashion designers, local consumers and fashion traders. The research sample size was 40 respondents. Purposive sampling was used to select the fashion designers while simple random sampling was used to select local consumers and fashion traders. Quantitative data was collected through the administration of questionnaires to 35 respondents (local consumers and fashion traders) while the qualitative data was collected through interviews with 5 participants (fashion designers). Thus the data was collected through the administration of questionnaire and interviews. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 was used to analyse quantitative data from the questionnaire to generate descriptive statistics in the form of frequency tables and percentage distributions in order to give clear explanations, presentation and interpretation of the research results. Qualitative data was analyzed by using thematic analysis in order to generate themes.

3.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Perceptions of the implications of the influence of culture on Fashion Designers

Table 1: Implications of the influence of culture on fashion designers

Responses	Frequency	Percentage %
Influence thought	11	31.4
Affirms what is desirable	08	22.9
Value diversity	07	20.0
Affects norms	05	14.3
Affect the attitudes	04	11.4

Total	35	100
(Source: Field Work, 2022)	N=26	

The Table shows that eleven (11) out thirty-five (35) representing 31.4 % Of the respondents indicated that culture influence the thoughts of the consumers. This study agreed with Gan (2010) whose study indicated that culture play one of the most important role in consumer behavior and the place they live in. Culture is a complex phenomenon that incorporate all aspects of the experience shared beings and it is culture that dictates the social and economic expectations humans must adhere to in order to belong to their social group. In order to participate in a culture, it is necessary to adhere to the behaviors dictated by that culture.

The study reported that eight (8) out thirty-five (35) representing 22.9 % of the respondents revealed that culture affirms what is desirable. It is important to point out that culture influences consumers' thoughts and behavior. Culture operates primarily by setting boundaries for individual behavior and influencing the functioning of each institution as the family and mass media. The findings of this study greed with Spencer (2010) that people from different culture consume fashion differently primarily because of their differences in value and norms. Cultural values are widely held beliefs that affirms what is desirable. These values affect behavior through norms, which specify situations.

Consumer behavior differs because values inherited by consumers differ from culture to culture. Western culture inspire local designers in clothing. Thus the finding of the study was in line with Joy (2010) whose results indicated that the overall consumers are differently influenced by others in planned and impulse purchase situations, even after controlling for price. A culture that values diversity not only accept a wide array of personal behavior and attitudes, but also likely to welcome variety in terms of consuming the fashion and other products. Collectively, culture tend to place a strong value of uniformity. Mooji (2010) found out that more individualistic cultures tend to value cultural diversity. The study revealed that the local consumers tend to consume products that everyone else is consuming, hence culture determine the dressing that has dominated the society.

The study reported that seven (7) out of thirty-five (35) representing 14.3 % of the respondents indicated that culture value diversity. Market is all about individuals' preferences and understanding of consumer needs and steering the consumer towards the products by creating certain wants in the minds of the customers. The knowledge and understanding of consumer behavior which has become the basic task on both the entrepreneurial and the institutional levels. Thus fashion designers and traders have come to realise that consumers have adopted a more aggressive and demanding role. This leads to differences in consumption patterns. It is for this reason that they have to modify their attitudes for consumers from different cultures which differ in their reaction towards foreign products and advertising (Sertanya, 2013).

The study showed that five (5) out thirty-five (35) representing 14.3 % of the respondents reported that culture affects the norms of the consumers. Culture is the fundamental determinant of a person's wants and behavior. This is why Mooji (2010) explained culture as the whole includes knowledge, beliefs, immoral customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by the humans as members of society, thus culture is a comprehensive concept and it includes almost everything that influences individuals through process and behaviors. It also influences the way

people make decisions (Dinesha, 2014). Thus the culture of the people creates a huge impact on purchase decision for clothes in order to meet new objectives. For this reason, culture plays a critical role in selecting the fabrics and design of products. Gan (2010) discussed that the success of the fashion trend lies in the way society interpret the fashion trend and judges. Thus its impact can be measured by the level of its social acceptance. The important of culture is automatic and almost invisible, Culture affects how consumer use or consume product. The study reported that four (4) out of thirty-five (35) representing 11.4 % revealed that culture affects the attitudes of consumers in selecting their design. Basically, culture is the part of every society and is the important cause of every society and is the important cause of person wants and behavior. Thus the influence of culture on buying behavior varies from country to country therefore designers have to be very careful in analysing the culture during the process of designing. Therefore, consumer's cultural value in regarded as the fundamental determination of a person's wants and behavior (Kotter, 2010). Thus culture not only influences consumer behavior but also reflects it. It is mirror of both the values and possession of its members since culture is not static but evolve and change slowly over time.

Kailash (2010) explained that culture provide insights to suitable dress for specific occasion such as what to wear at home, to school, to work, to church and ceremonies. Culture also has influence on our attitudes to things and issue such as products, the type of clothes to wear culture as one of the influence on consumer behavior, exists to satisfy the need of people within a society. The inner behavior, attributes ideas, desires, values are the rules permitting or prohibiting certain type behavior in specified situations. The core values of a society define how products are used, with regard to their needs. Sertanya (2013) discussed that cultural orientation of an individual is a major underpinning of some ones perception about the ethically of affirms marketing behavior, since it is conducive to shaping idealistic and egoistic ideologies. Marketing strategies are unlikely to change cultural values but marketing does influence culture. The consumers interacted with believes that culture has an impact of consumer behavior. Spencer (2010) explained that culture is the sum total of learned beliefs, values and customs that serves to direct the consumer that serves to direct the consumer behavior of members of a particular society. Joy (2010) discussed that cultural values express the collection principles, standards and priorities the community. Thus culture and its values are transmitted from one generation to another and individuals learn values and culture through socialization and acculturation. This means that the behavior of people towards fashion depend on their values and norms learnt within the particular culture. Culture has an impact on consumer through the norms and values established through established by society in which they live.

Culture affects how consumers use or consumer products, consumer buy products to obtain function form and meaning, all of which fashion industries must consider since they are defined by cultural context of consumption. It is important to know the behavior related to culture as it is one of the main causes of bringing change to the buying behavior of the consumer. Krugman (2015) explained that social culture plays a major role in shaping consumer behavior. Consumer values and needs always influence the shaping of consumer reaction towards marketing market stimuli based on social culture.

One of the participants interviewed indicated that culture has influences on consumers by saying that:

Culture affect the way consumers think, their thought on the way they feel to dress is determined by culture. Their thought helps to determine the type of clothes to purchase. (P5)

Furthermore another participant who was interviewed submitted that:

Culture affirms what is desirable, it is the fundamental determinant of a person's wants and behavior. The level of diversity and uniformity affects the consumers in fashion industry. (P3).

Western culture due to globalization resulted into the deviation of the traditional way of dressing. Most people have adopted the western styles of dressing. This was also revealed by Joy (2010) that globalization had slowly resulting into extinction of the local and traditional attires in society. Many people have opted to put on foreign way of dressing such as shorts, women putting on shorts trousers, short miniskirts attires than the indigenous attires. Thus the people have lost the appreciation for their traditional way of dressing.

One of the fashion desiners reported that:

The western culture has contributed to the high prevalency of sexual harassment cases in our society. the way the dressing has been taken needs much to be desired. The western culture on fashion and design increased incidences of rape cases and child defilements in our various communitites because of the mode of dressing by our young girls and daughters. (P1)

Concerning the implications of western culture on consumer behavior, one of the participants explained that:

If we are not careful, our local attires will no longer be in existence, rather it will extinct. Anyway, the majority of the local attires are no longer there in this industry because the people have opted for foreign or western fashion and designs. (P4)

The traditional and local attires that were there do not exist in this age. I tend to wonder ten to fifteen years from now. The people have stopped going for the traditional wearing. We need to collectively as one in order to preserve our local attires for the generation to come. (P2)

Furthermore, Sertanya (2013) discussed that clothing serve as a marker of cultural identity, social status, and group affiliation. Traditional clothing designs often incorporate motifs, patterns, and techniques passed down through generations, reflecting a cultural heritage that connects individuals to their ancestors and community. Social norms and customs play a crucial role in shaping clothing design. Cultural expectations regarding modesty, gender roles, and social hierarchies influence the types of garments worn and the manner in which they are designed. For example, in some cultures, specific colors or styles of clothing may be reserved for ceremonial occasions while others may dictate the appropriate attire for everyday activities or formal events.

Aesthetic preferences and artistic traditions vary across cultures, influencing the design elements and techniques employed in clothing design. Different cultures prioritise certain colors, patterns, textures, and embellishments based on aesthetic traditions that have evolved (Vernkatasamy, 2015). Globalisation and cultural exchange have contributed to the hybridisation of clothing design, as designers draw inspiration from diverse cultural traditions and incorporate elements from different

parts of the world. This cross-cultural exchange lead to the fusion of styles, resulting in innovative designs that blend traditional craftsmanship with contemporary aesthetics.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The comprehensive findings presented in the study highlight the complex role of culture in shaping consumer behavior within the fashion domain. It is evident that culture infuses every aspect of individuals' thoughts, desires, norms, and attitudes towards fashion consumption, influencing not only personal preferences but also societal expectations and trends. To navigate this complex landscape effectively, it is imperative for fashion industry stakeholders to acknowledge and embrace cultural diversity, recognising the richness and uniqueness of various cultural perspectives. Simultaneously, there is a pressing need to respect and preserve traditional values and attire, safeguarding cultural heritage and identity in the face of globalization's homogenizing effects. Moreover, ethical considerations must be prioritized, with a commitment to promoting social well-being and inclusivity through responsible design choices and marketing practices. By fostering a culture of inclusiveness, respect, and sustainability, the fashion industry can strive towards creating a more equitable and culturally sensitive environment that resonates with diverse consumer populations worldwide.

4.1 Recommendations

In response to the encroachment of western fashion on traditional attire, there's a need for concerted efforts to preserve and promote indigenous clothing styles. Fashion designers and industry stakeholders should collaborate to showcase the richness and cultural significance of traditional attire, encouraging its continued appreciation and adoption. Acknowledging the influence of clothing design on societal norms and behaviors, fashion designers should prioritise ethical considerations in their designs. This includes promoting modesty, respecting cultural sensitivities, and avoiding designs that perpetuate harmful stereotypes or contribute to social issues. By designing with cultural sensitivity and ethical awareness, fashion can become a vehicle for positive cultural expression and social change.

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